

The Tragedy of the Russian Revolution

SECOND ACT

By L. B. BOUDIN

On the morrow of the Bolshevik overturn in Russia which closed the first phase of the Russian Revolution, writing in the November-December issue of *The Class Struggle*, I expressed the opinion that the tragedy of the Russian Revolution consisted in the fact that, being born of the great world-war and therefore indissolubly connected with it, its success depended upon the assistance of either the "democratic governments" of the Allied nations, on the one hand, or the "revolutionary proletariat" of the Central Empires, on the other. I attributed the failure of the Kerensky regime to its betrayal by the "democratic governments" upon which it had pinned its hopes; and I predicted a similar fate for the Bolshevik regime, which was evidently depending for its success upon the "revolutionary proletariat" of Germany and Austria. I stated then that: "unless the unexpected happens, the hopes which the Russian 'extremists' place upon the German proletariat are doomed to disappointment, even as the hopes which the 'moderates' have placed in the 'democracies' of Europe and America." And I closed that article with the following paragraph, summarizing the situation as I saw it then:

"Herein lies the tragedy of the Russian Revolution—for a real tragedy it is, in the old Greek conception of that term, a fatal situation from which there seems to be no escape. Bolshevik and Menshevik, 'extremists' and 'moderates' seem to be alike foredoomed to failure. At least as long as the Russian Revolution is compelled to choose between the Scylla of 'democratic governments' and the Charibdis of a 'German revolutionary proletariat.' For, the present at least, both are pure figments of the imagination, each bound to prove a broken reed in the hands of any one who places reliance upon it."

Hardly four months have passed since those lines were written and our worst fears have already been fulfilled, making what may have then seemed to many unwarrantedly gloomy forebodings, a rather mild and reserved statement of an appalling situation. In these four months Russia, Revolutionary Russia, has been broken up into fragments; the Russian Revolution has been brought to its knees, humiliated, outraged, and compelled to accept a disgraceful peace, denying its own revolutionary-internationalist principles; and the counter-revolution placed firmly in the saddle, working its counter-revolutionary will with a swiftness and thoroughness which no Korniloff, nay, even no Czar, could ever have dreamed of.

All of these events hang together, depend upon one another. Russia broken into fragments means such a weakening of the Russian Revolution as to make her an easy prey to external and internal enemies. Russia capitulating before German Militarism means Russia laying herself prostrate before the counter-revolution.

In the same issue of *The Class Struggle* in which I wrote on the Tragedy of the Russian Revolution I also called attention, in an editorial note, to the warning which the veteran Socialist thinker Karl Kautsky sounded to all those who were straying from the field of true Socialist and revolutionary policy by helping, or at least not exerting themselves to prevent the break-up of Russia. And I quoted in this connection from an article which he had written for the *Neue Zeit* before he had been displaced in the editorship of that once famous organ of Socialist thought by a Scheidemann lackey, in which Kautsky said:

"Such considerations may under certain circumstances demand imperatively that a great revolutionary state be held together against its reactionary enemies If the Finns and Ukrainians now want to get away from the Russian state, it is merely an after-effect of the policies of Czarism which drove them into opposition to Russia and of a lack of faith on their part in the staying qualities of the